

Fort Mifflin, Soldiers' Barracks
Mud Island
Marine and Penrose Ferry Road
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1225-E

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. PA-1225 E

FORT MIFFLIN SOLDIERS' BARRACKS

Location: Parallel to northeast scarp, just northwest of northeast sally port of Fort Mifflin, Mud Island, Marine and Penrose Ferry Roads, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: City of Philadelphia.

Present Use: Historic site museum.

Significance: Built in the 1790s, the soldiers' barracks is one of the larger structures of the fort and a fine example of early barracks structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first mention of these barracks appears in 1802 in Jonathan Williams' "Report on Fortifications," which included "one row of brick barracks, one hundred and seventeen feet long, twenty seven and three fourths feet wide-only one Story, divided in seven rooms-five of which may accommodate each twenty five men" (Dr. 245, Sht. 6, RG 77, NAB). In 1836, the building was extensively renovated "including floors, lathing, and plastering and roofing, doors, windows, sash and casing...." Expenditures were listed for "twelve columns for front Quarters" (Delafield to Gratiot, November 22 and 28, 1836, RG 77, NAB), indicating that the porch across the front was also added at this time. Belin's 1839 drawings show the barracks to have the colonnade as well as a gambrel roof, which has since been altered to gable. For additional information, see Fort Mifflin History (PA-1225).

Prepared by Alison K. Hoagland
Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Fall, 1979.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The barracks, one of the earlier extant structures of the fort, was

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altered by the addition of a colonnaded porch in the 1830s and by a gable roof over the original gambrel.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main structure is 117' (eight-bay front) x 27'-11" and has a 7'-2" wide colonnade extending the length of the facade.
2. Foundations: Brick with foundation vents.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are red brick laid in common bond with a header course every sixth course. Yellow and white wash remains in protected areas.
4. Structural system: Load bearing walls.
5. Porches: Extending across the southwest front elevation is the one-story colonnaded porch. Its roof, an extension of the main roof slope, is supported on twelve equally spaced, unfluted columns with gneiss block plinths set on slate paving contained within a gneiss curb. Doric-type column capitals are below the boxed soffit with fascia drips. Narrow boarding sheathes the ceiling.
6. Chimneys: Three ridge chimneys, approximately equally spaced, extend above the roof. Though two chimneys are partially collapsed, all have a double course corbel below one course at the top of each stack. The chimneys have been raised to accommodate the height of the gable roof.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Three doorways with plain, flush gneiss sills are located on the southwest facade and are spaced with pairs of window openings. An ovolo backband trims the frames

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which are each hung with pairs of paneled doors having vertical board exteriors. Typically, the panels of each leaf, with a small square panel over two long panels separated by a wide lock rail, are raised and have simple panel molding. The boarding is unbeaded. Each door is hung with pairs of wrought iron strap hinges on pintles driven into the frames. At the southeast end elevation, which has two first floor bays and one second floor bay, a six-panel door within a beaded and an ovolo backband trimmed frame opens into the east room. Typical mid-nineteenth century quirked panel molding defines the panels, which are slightly raised. Extending below the gneiss sill are two plain steps. The single masonry opening of the northwest end elevation provided the only access to the second floor. Within the untrimmed frame is a board door hung on a pair of wrought iron strap hinges on driven pintles. The door originally opened onto a landing above a wooden stairway which extended in a straight run to the west corner. Concrete piers remain for platform supports and joist pockets remain in the masonry below the wooden door sill for the framing. At mid jamb height an additional pocket received the handrail. A similar doorway is located at the opposite end of the second floor and is hung with a board door having exterior vertical and interior horizontal boarding. There is no evidence of an exterior stairway; but a hoist beam extends from the masonry above the opening. The door is secured with a pair of dead bolts and is hung with strap hinges.

b. Windows and shutters:

Twelve-over-twelve-light sashes, fragments of which indicate 8"x10"

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glazing, originally filled the six window openings of the northeast rear elevation, the five openings of the southwest front elevation, and the one opening of the southeast end elevation. Typically each opening has unbeaded frames with ovolo backband trim and plain sills. An exterior sash bead provides a stop for pairs of paneled shutters, similar in detail to the doors with three panels and vertical boarding. Dead bolts set on the narrow lock rails secured the shutters, which have ring pulls, when closed. Each leaf is held open with a wrought iron shutter dog.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The porch roof and existing gable roof are covered with 18" wide sheets of zinc with standing seams. Originally the roof was gambrel with short, low pitched upper roof slopes and had parapets which were kicked at the eaves. At present, the roofing extends over the gable ends which lack bargeboarding. The porch roof, with horizontal boarding in the half gables, appears to extend from the kick of the original parapets and has beaded barge boarding.
- b. Cornice and eaves: At the porch, the entablature over the columns consists of an applied fillet dividing the lower fascia into architrave and frieze, a small bed molding and a boxed corona without crown molding. The cornice has returns at end half-gables. On the northeast rear elevation the roofing overhangs a boxed cornice without a crown molding and with an ovolo-cavetto bed molding.
- c. Dormers: Three gabled dormers are equally spaced on each roof slope.

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The dormers, which originally had eight-over-eight-light sashes within backband trimmed frames, have crown molding which extends under the eaves and up the rakes. Sheets of zinc with flush joints sheathe the cheeks and roofs.

Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. First floor: The space is divided into basically four areas which are lineal and separated by chimney breasts with back to back fireplaces. At the southeast, the smaller space is divided into two small rooms, the east one of which has an outside entrance. Vestibules at each front entrance and the transverse walls open into each space.
 - b. Second floor: Single space.
2. Flooring: Random width boards.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Each vestibule has two interior doorways which have single fascia architrave trim with a backband and beading. The doors, hung with wrought iron strap hinges on pintles, are board and batten with diagonal braces.
 - b. Windows: The window openings are untrimmed except for narrow boarding which is received on projecting sills.
5. Decorative features and trim: Beaded baseboarding extends around the walls. The small south room of the

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southeast suite has a built-in cabinet between the entrance vestibule and the chimney breast.

6. Hardware:

The vestibule doors have cast iron rim locks.

7. Heating:

Back to back fireplaces each with a stone lintel over a large firebox, originally heated the first floor rooms. The northwest end room has one fireplace while the two larger central rooms have a fireplace at each end. The southeast suite rooms each have a corner fireplace. All the fireboxes, with their brick hearths laid in a stretcher pattern, appear to have been reworked. Stoves apparently heated the second floor.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The Soldiers' Barracks is located adjacent to the Northeast Sally Port, perpendicular to its axis and parallel to the northeast rampart. Facing the parade, aligned with the Storehouse (HABS No. PA-1225-D), the barracks forms a right angle with the Officers' Quarters (HABS No. PA-1225-F) to the northwest and is connected to it by a slate walk. Between the structures a ramp rises to the terreplein of the north bastion. A brick gutter extends along the gneiss curb of the colonnade from a splash block at the south end, parallels the slate walk to the Officers' Quarters, and ties into the drainage system of the fort.

Prepared by Rodd L. Wheaton
Architect
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Spring, 1974.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Fort Mifflin projects of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) were carried out during the summers of 1969 and 1970 with grants from the Haas Community Funds in cooperation with the Philadelphia Historical Commission, the Independence National Historical Park, and the Shackamaxon Society, Inc. The projects were under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief, HABS. The 1969 survey team was supervised by R. Michael Schneider (Texas A & M University) with student assistant architects Allan H. Steenhusen (Iowa State University), Bruce V.A. Bonacher (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), and Malcolm Heard, Jr. (Tulane University). The 1970 survey team was supervised by Allan H. Steenhusen (Iowa State University) with architect Ronald B. Tjerandsen (University of Washington) and student assistant architect John T. Shumate (Carnegie-Mellon University). The drawings were completed in 1971 by HABS architect Allan H. Steenhusen and student assistant architect Tim Wolosz (University of Cincinnati). The drawings were edited in 1972-73 under the direction of John C. Poppeliers, Chief, HABS, by HABS architects Rodd L. Wheaton and John A. Burns with student assistant architect K. Barry Peckham (University of Cincinnati). Historian for the project was A.C. (Gus) Hamblett until 1972. The data was then edited by several member of the HABS staff, including Rodd L. Wheaton, John A. Burns, and Philip Hamp, and completed by Alison K. Hoagland in 1979.